

College of Social Sciences Strategic Plan 2015-2020

Serving Humanity, Doing Public Good

The motto of the College of Social Sciences (COSS) encapsulates the shared focus of the academic programs and centers housed in the College. Service to humanity is the founding principle at the heart of our various disciplines and informs our approach to the place of COSS in the wider community. Doing the public good is the natural extension of our broad commitment to our shared communities.

As academic disciplines, our departments explore key aspects of the human condition and broaden our understanding of life and how it is lived. This exploration is critical to the development of informed, engaged, and active members of our communities. The partnerships formed between COSS programs and centers and the broader communities help our students to see the impact they may have on the future of local, regional, state, national, and global communities. They also help our faculty and staff engage in the community to find avenues for mutually beneficial relationships. The continued success of our efforts to serve humanity and do public good depends on our ability to effectively and sustainably maintain our programs and centers and their relationships both at the University of West Georgia (UWG) and with our wider community of stakeholders.

This Strategic Plan was developed for the five years ending in 2020 to help guide the COSS community as we endeavor to make the world a better place. The development of the Strategic Plan reflected the COSS commitment to engagement, transparency, and stakeholder input. The ad hoc COSS Strategic Planning Committee was selected from the Faculty and Administrative Councils of the College. The development of the plan included a period of public comment during which the contributions of the broader COSS community were sought. The comments and suggestions submitted during this period were incorporated in accordance with the elements driven by the UWG Strategic Plan and the contributions of the members of the Committee. The resulting draft document was circulated to the COSS community for comment. Valuable contributions were made during this comment period. The Strategic Plan that follows is the product of this process.

The Strategic Plan provides a map that will serve as a guide in our continuing mission to serve humanity and do public good. The Committee thanks those individuals whose contributions throughout the process offered invaluable assistance in the crafting of the final document.

The College of Social Science Strategic Planning Committee

- Greg Dixon, Patrick Hadley, David Jenks, and Ashley Smallwood

College of Social Sciences Mission, Vision, and Values

COSS Mission Statement

The College of Social Sciences at UWG is committed to excellence in teaching, scholarship and service in the interest of promoting the public good. The College aims to provide students with an understanding of contemporary and historical aspects of the various disciplines of the social sciences and the skills necessary for professional competence.

COSS Vision Statement

The College of Social Sciences at UWG will be a recognized leader in creating a collaborative learning and research culture, promoting community engagement, attracting an increased proportion of talented and passionate students and faculty. The College will provide distinctive and soughtout programs and graduates, leading to an expanded and diversified resource base.

UWG Values

The Strategic Plan of the College of Social Sciences is informed and motivated by the core values of the University of West Georgia. We embrace these core values as the guiding principles behind our plan for the implementation of the strategic imperatives of UWG. The institutional mission and daily operation of the University of West Georgia are guided by our values that support our vision to be the best place to work, learn, and succeed.

- The value of **ACHIEVEMENT** is evident in our commitment to the academic and social success of our students, staff, and faculty.
- The value of **CARING** is evident in our consistent concern and regard for our students, staff, and faculty as well as the larger communities where we live and whom we serve.
- The value of **COLLABORATION** is evident in our commitment to shared governance, teamwork, and a cooperative spirit that shape our interactions with students, staff, faculty, and the communities we serve.
- The value of **INCLUSIVENESS** is evident in our commitment to celebrating our diversity, our collaborative spirit, and creating a welcoming campus that is emotionally and physically safe for all.
- The value of **INNOVATION** is evident in our commitment to fostering a learning atmosphere in which new methods and ideas consistent with our vision and mission are respected and rewarded.
- The value of **INTEGRITY** is evident in our commitment to rigorous ethical standards in our classrooms and offices, in our conduct toward each other, and in service to our communities.

- The value of **SUSTAINABILITY** is evident in our obligation to maintaining ecological balance in our planning and operations that make possible for future generations the same or better quality of opportunities for success available to present employees and students.
- The value of **WISDOM** is evident in our commitment to teaching and learning that emphasizes knowledge for the purpose of positively transforming the lives of our employees and students, as well as improving the world in which we live.

Strategic Imperative #1 Student Success: Enhanced Learning, Access, Progression, and Development

Student success is the core of the mission of the College of Social Sciences (COSS). COSS will support a culture of completion and student achievement internally, as well as in collaboration with other programs across the university.

We will recruit students who are interested in COSS programs as part of their selection of UWG as a top choice institution and whose academic profile suggests a strong likelihood they will thrive in our College environment.

COSS will support university efforts to ease the financial burden of attending college and help students succeed from their initial engagement with COSS through timely progress, graduation, and placement into a successful career. COSS will also provide experiences beyond the classroom that encourage students in our programs to discover paths to meaningful engagement with various perspectives, lifestyles, and cultures and to understand pressing local and global challenges. Furthermore, we will promote sustainability in all student success efforts to ensure their viability and endurance.

Expectations for student participation and achievement will rely on responsibility and accountability shared by students, faculty, and an engaged COSS community. The ultimate goal is not only characterized by progression towards the degree, timely graduation, and attainment of career goals but also an enhanced ability to grow and develop into engaged citizens and effective leaders.

Goal 1 - Increase student persistence and timely progression to degree attainment.

- Action 1: Implement and continually assess evidence-based strategies that improve retention, progression, and graduation rates (RPG). (1.A.1, 1.A.2, 1.A.3, 1.D.3)
 - 1A: Support collaborative efforts with other programs to promote improvements in RPG.
 - 1B: Support innovative efforts by faculty and staff to promote early identification of at-risk students and intervention strategies to assist these students.
- Action 2: Develop and implement a plan for ensuring that class sizes and delivery methods provide appropriate opportunities for student learning. (1.A.2, 1.A.3, 1.D.4, 4.C.1)

Goal 2 - Attract students with characteristics consistent with our vision and mission who will choose UWG as a top choice institution

- Action 1: Support University efforts in the areas of recruitment and enrollment expansion. (1.B.1, 1.B.2)

Goal 3 - Facilitate students' responsible financial access to UWG

- Action 1: Where appropriate, in COSS and department planning, consider the impact of new programs on students' financial access to UWG. (1.C.1, 1.C.2, 1.D.4)
- Action 2: Support UWG initiatives to facilitate students' responsible financial access to UWG. (1.C.1, 1.C.2, 1.D.4)
- Action 3: Support programs developed by the College with appropriate and sustainable funding to limit the financial impact on students. (1.C.1, 4.C.1, 4.D.1)

Goal 4 - Nurture the development of the whole person through student engagement in all aspects of the university experience

- Action 1: Develop and implement new policies and procedures to promote the use of new technology in student-professor interactions (such as virtual office hours, advising via Skype, and other applications of new technology). (1.A.3, 1.B.2, 1.C.1, 1.D.3, 1.D.4)
- Action 2: Develop and implement a plan for increasing student-faculty collaboration in research projects. Support this plan with appropriate, sustainable allocation of resources. (1.A.3, 1.C.2, 1.D.2, 1.D.3, 1.D.4)
- Action 3: Foster a culture of student engagement in programs and activities within College. (1.A.3, 1.D.3)
- Action 4: Develop and implement a plan for the integration of a wide range of learning experiences for students (such as experiential learning, interdisciplinary programs, service learning, travel programs, and student participation in College labs and centers). (1.A.3, 1.C.2, 1.D.2, 1.D.3, 1.D.4, 2.A.3)
- Action 5: Develop and implement a plan to provide quality academic advising experiences with emphasis on effective academic planning, early identification of a major for undergraduates, and a clear pathway to student accountability and self-sufficiency. (1.D.1)

Goal 5 – Promote the sustainability of student success programs

- Action 1: Incorporate sustainable support (e.g., funding, staffing, and infrastructure) in all initiatives, plans, programs, and other activities in support of Strategic Imperative 1. (4.C.1, 4.D.1)

Strategic Imperative #2 Academic Success: Academic Programming and Faculty Support

As a pivotal part of the best place to live, work, and succeed, the College of Social Sciences will place student success at the center of its approach to our programs. COSS academic programs will focus on meeting identified needs of local, regional, state, and global needs and will provide avenues for the engagement of students, staff, and faculty in these communities. The values of serving humanity and doing the public good are more than just the motto of the college. COSS academic programs will build upon our existing strengths in community engagement to expand educational and service offerings that will provide high-impact learning opportunities for our students while serving the public good.

To ensure the strongest foundation on which to develop our mission of services, COSS will provide leadership in the recruitment and retention of excellent faculty and staff. To maintain our commitment to service in our broad range of shared communities, COSS will strongly support efforts to recruit, retain, and support faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds.

To maintain and expand our leadership in the use of innovative teaching practices, COSS will foster that supports the scholarship of teaching and learning as well as the inclusion of students in the wider research efforts of the faculty.

To promote the continuous improvement of the environment for student success, COSS will foster a culture of evaluation that will support the improvement of teaching in all academic programs. Part of this process will be the evaluation of appropriate staff and faculty support of COSS academic programs with the goal of ensuring the sustainable development of the College.

Goal 1 - Assure that all academic programs have the capacity to transform lives and address the needs of the region, state, and beyond

- Action 1: Continually evaluate the quality, productivity, and viability of COSS academic programs, assuring that they are grounded in liberal arts and professional preparation. (2.A.1)
- Action 2: Practice and recognize innovative and effective instruction in all academic programs and develop collaborative new models for academic-program delivery. (2.A.2, 3.C.2)
- Action 3: Where appropriate, support the development of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary programs to leverage College expertise across department and program lines and provide additional learning experiences for students. (1.D.2, 1.D.3, 1.D.4, 2.A.3)
- Action 4: Expand efforts to engage students in high-impact, experiential learning activities such as internships, service learning, practicum placements, study abroad, research, or related professional and creative experiences. (1.D.2, 1.D.3, 1.D.4, 2.A.3)

- Action 5: Continually evaluate the staffing needs of COSS programs to ensure that programs have sufficient support staff to provide high-quality, productive programs. (2.A.1, 4.B.1)

Goal 2 - Develop and implement specific initiatives aimed at enhanced recruitment, retention, compensation, and development of high-quality faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds who demonstrate a commitment to UWG values and contribute to UWG's mission and vision

- Action 1: Support the University multi-year plan for salary equity that includes faculty and staff salary targets and a plan to fund the achievement of those targets. (2.B.1)
- Action 2: Support the review, revision, and streamlining of the hiring/search processes to assure alignment with UWG values and optimal HR practices. (2.B.2)
- Action 3: Organize and institutionalize efforts to recruit a diverse faculty and staff and assure that the requirements for career progression (including promotion and tenure for faculty) recognize the diverse interests and capabilities of faculty that advance the mission of the institution. (2.B.3)

Goal 3 - Enhance the support for and recognition of scholarship, research, and creative activities conducted by faculty, staff, and students

- Action 1: Identify and support initiatives to promote scholarship and research that improve teaching and learning. (2.C.1)
- Action 2: Implement a support system that encourages and recognizes research that engages students, solves problems, and advances creativity and knowledge. (2.C.2)
- Action 3: Encourage contributions to scholarship, research, and creative activities by faculty, staff, and students, including collaborative efforts. (1.A.3, 1.D.2, 2.C.1, 2.C.2)
- Action 4: Identify clear, scholarly, creative, research priorities and allocate resources to drive and support those priorities. (2.C.3)
 - 4A: Establish mechanisms to ensure recognition of research agendas reflecting the diversity of subject matter, research methods, and professional protocols across programs.
 - 4B: Establish mechanisms to ensure recognition of professional program activities within the context of research and scholarship.
 - 4C: Establish mechanisms to promote the recognition of innovative teaching activities.
 - 4D: Support professional development activities related to the scholarship of teaching and learning, including conference attendance.

Goal 4 - Measure and improve the quality of teaching in all academic programs

- Action 1: Develop processes to identify, assess, and improve the quality of instruction at all locations and through all modes of delivery. (2.D.1)
- Action 2: Implement faculty and staff development opportunities consistent with COSS programs. (2.D.2)
- Action 3: Support University efforts to increase opportunities for faculty and staff to practice pedagogical research including organizing conferences, seminars, and other outreach and development activities (2.D.3)

Goal 5 – Promote the sustainability of academic success programs

- Action 1: Incorporate sustainable support (e.g., funding, staffing, and infrastructure) in all initiatives, plans, programs, and other activities in support of Strategic Imperative 2. (4.C.1, 4.D.1)

Strategic Imperative #3 Successful Partnerships: Building Engaged, Mutually Beneficial Collaborations

COSS values successful partnerships and is dedicated to building collaborations that are mutually beneficial for our students, faculty, staff, and community. In creating engaged partnerships between academic programs, community organizations, businesses, and government agencies, COSS will promote activities to support our mission of serving humanity and doing public good. COSS will continue our strong relationships with community stakeholders and leverage these relationships to expand our role in the community in a manner that supports successful partnerships.

The COSS network of partnerships will help support and sustain opportunities for students to take part in experiential and service learning in COSS labs and centers and expand professional development opportunities for COSS faculty and staff.

COSS will work with community stakeholders to broaden awareness of our effective partnerships and the benefits they bring to the local, regional, state, and global communities.

Goal 1 - Create and cultivate new partnerships to support strategic initiatives

- Action 1: Develop and implement a plan for COSS stakeholder input at all levels (i.e., faculty, staff, students, and community) for developing partnerships. (3.A.1, 3.B.1)
- Action 2: Establish partnerships with community organizations, businesses, government agencies, and other organizations to promote activities that support and advance sustainable economic, social, and cultural development. (3.B.2)
- Action 3: Establish partnerships with community organizations, businesses, government agencies, and other organizations that support and advance the COSS mission of serving humanity and doing public good. (3.A.1, 3.B.1, 3.B.2, 3.B.3)

Goal 2 - Develop, assess, and sustain a network of mutually beneficial partnerships

- Action 1: Build mutually beneficial collaborations that support experiential and service learning in COSS labs and centers. (3.B.3, 3.C.1, 3.C.3)
- Action 2: Develop and implement a plan for evaluation of the effectiveness of partnerships in providing mutually beneficial outcomes. (3.A.1)

Goal 3 - Expand community awareness, visibility, and support of university activities and mutually beneficial partnerships

- Action 1: Develop and implement a sustainable communications plan to inform internal and external stakeholders about COSS's activities and partnerships, along with the benefits generated by and for all parties. (3.C.1)
- Action 2: Celebrate and reward student, faculty, and staff accomplishments achieved in partnerships with partner organizations. (3.C.2)

- Action 3: Create community outreach programs that highlight the accomplishments and capacities of COSS student, faculty, and staff for mutually beneficial collaborations with community organizations and other community stakeholders. (3.A.1, 3.B.1, 3.B.2, 3.C.1)

Goal 4 – Promote the sustainability of successful partnership programs

- Action 1: Incorporate sustainable support (e.g., funding, staffing, and infrastructure) in all initiatives, plans, programs, and other activities in support of Strategic Imperative 3. (4.C.1, 4.D.1)

Strategic Imperative #4 Operational Success: Effectiveness and Sustainability

COSS is committed to the principles of operational effectiveness and sustainability. COSS will actively support its organizational goals in a manner that is sustainable in terms of social, financial, and environmental challenges and opportunities.

Building a university that is sought after and the best place to work, learn, and succeed requires developing a culture of continuous improvement. Operational success is not a destination, but a journey. A journey for faculty, staff, and students to pursue through professional development and personal growth. This journey must be supported by appropriate logistics in the form of compensation, opportunities for advancement, and support for a healthy work-life balance.

The COSS commitment to this development is encapsulated in the College motto: “Serving humanity, doing public good.” A vital component of this service is accomplished through the recruitment, retention, and development of collegial faculty and staff and the development of a sustainable culture of professional and personal development.

To support the sustainability of our mission, COSS will promote a culture of strategic planning and assessment.

Goal 1 - Create a workplace of choice distinguished by talented, engaged, and diverse staff

- Action 1: Develop and implement an employee promotion and advancement protocol for both faculty and staff. (4.A.1)
- Action 2: Support the University efforts for implementing a market-driven compensation package and reward and recognition system that attract and retain the best employees at all levels. (2.B.1, 4.A.2)
- Action 3: Develop and implement a robust program of professional development for both faculty and staff. (4.A.3)

Goal 2 - Create an environment that is sustainable and relevant to the educational and personal needs of students; the aspirations of faculty and staff; and the economic, social, and cultural needs of the community

- Action 1: On an ongoing scheduled basis, assess the condition and suitability of College facilities, technology, space utilization, staffing, and infrastructure. (4.B.1)
- Action 2: Partner with local stakeholders in both public and private organizations in activities that benefit UWG, its stakeholder partners, and promote sustainable economic and cultural development. (4.B.2)
- Action 3: With individuals, foundations, and other service agencies, identify and develop partnerships and activities that improve our communities. (4.B.3)

Goal 3 - Foster a culture of strategic planning and assessment

- Action 1: Ensure that planning decisions within the College are informed by the UWG, COSS, and appropriate department strategic plans. (4.C.1)
- Action 2: Assure that all units within the College engage in meaningful assessment practices, including identifying expected outcomes, assessing the extent to which outcomes are met, and providing evidence of improvements based on results. (4.C.2)
- Action 3: Incorporate the concepts of social, financial, and environmental sustainability into COSS and department strategic planning. (4.D.1)

Goal 4 – Promote the sustainability of operational success programs

- Action 1: Incorporate sustainable support (e.g., funding, staffing, and infrastructure) in all initiatives, plans, programs, and other activities in support of Strategic Imperative 4.